

CHANGES ARE SWIFT FOR MEN IN BASKET

Wingless Airman Sings of
Fiery Bullets and
Parachutes

VALVES AND JUMPY NERVES

Yankee Balloons Stay on Job
While Yankee Planes Bag
Flocks of Drachens

To the Editor of THE STARS AND STRIPES:

When you sit on the edge of a cloud all day, holding a map in your hand, and you search for a spot that is far away out there in No Man's Land, when you see the drachens bursting time, the four hundred on the way, and you find you have busted the German line—

It's the end of a perfect day. We had a short talk the other day with the Chief des Ballonniers in the Premiere Armee Americaine, and he told us a few startling facts about the young fellows who were always going up in the air.

It doesn't matter whether it happened at Chateau-Thierry or St. Mihiel or Verdun, or in any other place, it happened at all three places, and the man we call Sam is most any old or rather young Lieut. who sits in the basket and, when he can blow the clouds out of his eyes, tells the battery commander where his shrap is bursting.

Now Sam needs a balloon in the new old S.A. and, while he approaches his first one without fear, he did have a little trepidation. When he landed in France, he was sent to a French balloon company on the front to get acquainted with pinard and acclimated to Boche planes.

Sam was told that the sector was a quiet one, but Sam thought he was in a boiler factory, filling a rush order for Schwab. On his first trip in the air—well, we could write a story that would require more space than the Encyclopedia Britannica, but space is limited and all that stuff.

Looking for the Streak

The French like to test a man's courage and they have many ways of finding out whether or not he has a streak of yellow. So Sam and Bill, both Lieut., were led up to the gas bag that was waiting to lift these two aspirants higher than they even anticipated that they would go in this world. Like all Americans, they donned the parachutes like true soldiers and climbed into the basket, while the quiet still voice of the French sergeant major gave the command, "Laissez monter, or, literally translated, "let her fly," and those two boots were lifted up as though by the magic of Hermann the Great.

Sam heard what he thought was a leak in the balloon, and he phoned the attendant at the winch. "The balloon is exploding or something," but the winch attendant softly replied, "No, she's valving."

Now Sam knew all about Archimedes' principle and he had Marlotte's laws (P V—pv) flashed to the must back in the home town high school, but he never thought of applying them to sausages. As a matter of fact, Sam never knew that a balloon had a valve.

Life at 1,200 Meters

But they were going up, or rather the world was going down. Finally, there was a sudden jolt, and a very polite voice said over the phone, "You are now at 1,200 meters. Let us know what you see and don't move around too much in the basket, as it is an old one and the bottom is liable to come out."

Bill admitted that he felt as cheerful as a chronic victim of melancholia, and Sam said, "The men in the balloons were a snap in comparison to ballooning." However, an argument started as to whether a body of water they saw was the ocean, Lake Michigan or a pond in France, but to settle the argument, the captain, who was in touch with the basket by phone, informed them that it was the sun shining on a rain cloud.

Suddenly—awfully suddenly—all around the basket went pop-pop-pop-bum-bum-bum! Everything seemed to go upside down all at once—little white streaks were passing everywhere, and big white bombs were exploding. There seemed to be three thousand voices talking on the phone at the same time. One thing was sure: they were going down tout de suite.

Trees Become Trees

Bill said, "Bryan had the right idea," but Sam was quite convinced that Sherman hit nearer the truth. Finally, they got to a spot where they could see that trees were trees—up at 3,600 feet, forests are forests—but, to get back to the story, the machine gunners and AAA had driven the plane (yes, that's what it was, a Boche plane) back to Suverkrut, Bill.

But all this happened long ago, when observers needed interlocking boots and fell for the story that the French were in the Bois-de-Bonlogne. Now, for example, at St. Mihiel, when an observer couldn't get an appetite for dinner unless he had one at least one parachute leap of 1,000 feet, when the Allied planes were dropping the Drachens like Annie Oakley used to shoot up clay pigeons in Buffalo Bill's Wild West, the American balloons were right on the job from sunrise to dark in spite of the fact that the Boche planes made almost superhuman efforts to get our balloons.

Our chase balloons bagged those that were not bagged by the Spads or anti-aircraft. Occasionally, however, they slipped through and burnt us. That's the time when a fellow needs a friend. But—when the whole sky goes crazy, when high explosive shells are screaming all around you and the Boche is pumping incendiary bullets at you and the balloon and the Spads are pumping them at him and the machine gunners on the ground are blazing away, you see the Boche go down in a flaming ray and you find you are no longer walking on a cloud—Oh, boy!—ain't it a grand and glorious feelin'!

CAPT. A.S.

AND NOBODY LAUGHED

The candle flickered as a gust of wind blew through the open door of the billet. "Yes," mused the corporal. "They always told me George Washington was an honest man. Yet they always close the banks on his birthday."

BOX CARS, BOX CARS, AND THEN BOX CARS

That's What War Means
to Engineers at Big
Rail Center

700 LAUNCHED IN SIX DAYS

Total of 10,949 Assembled and
Put in Service from Outfit's
Arrival to October 30

There is one bunch of Engineers at a certain big railroad center of the S.O.S. that does nothing but put up box cars and other pieces of rolling stock.

They follow the one-man-to-a-process system common to all up-to-date factories in the United States. The car parts are slapped on in turn as the wheels and frame come down the line of the three erection tracks, and by the time they get to the end—presto! They're ready to roll out. That is the way it is done.

Ninety-six complete cars, all assembled and ready to be pulled up to the front with their loads, is the daily average output of this outfit of Engineers. One day they got to a new record: the need was great and the stuff to meet the need was there. They have a record, too, of 60 cars—high side gondolas—slapped in to service in one day for one track, or a new car for Uncle Sam every ten minutes during a ten hour working day.

One week they organized a drive, one of a succession of drives, to beat their former output record. They called it "Colonel W—'s drive," as if to imply that it was a tribute to their commanding officer. In that week of six working days they launched on the road 700 new, fully assembled cars—a new record—being more than an even 10,000 that they had brought into being since first coming to France. Their total of cars assembled and put in commission up to October 30 was 10,949.

Parts in Morning, Cars at Night

For every 100 cars that they turn out, they have a hundred 125 parts in the morning. "If you give us the parts in the morning, you'll get the cars at night," is their axiom. With the crating and boxes that come in with the car parts, they have built all their barracks, all their offices, all their furniture, and have had enough kindling left over to stoke up their mammoth kitchen.

That kitchen is the one intended for the partially completed railroad station that adjoins their work yard. They have taken over for their mess hall the big salle de reception, or waiting room, of the station, and in it they can seat 1,400 men at a time, or about 400 less than their day shift numbers. The mess has to be going, in part at least, at all hours, for besides the night force of over 400 men there are many hungry railroaders who try to make X—about meal times and to rest up there between runs. One of the features of these Engineers' mess is "mush with your meals." The band of the regiment, after driving rivets into tank cars and other odd jobs all day, comes in at noon and at night, mounts the big rostrum where the chef de gare was destined to hang out, and toots away lustily.

Play for the Fun of It

The wonder grows when it is discovered that it is not an authorized band at all, but a volunteer organization, equipped with funds supplied by one of the regiment's officers. It plays not by order, but just for the fun of it, and it plays well.

In the line of their production records and their salvage ingenuity, the books of the Engineers show that only something less than 20 per cent of them knew the work of slapping cars together before they joined the outfit. Only seven per cent of their 71 officers had had any experience in the railroading game in any of its forms. They learned it all over here. As for keeping on at it after the war is over—well, they don't quite know, but there's lots worse.

A. E. F. SHOP TALK

Approximately a quarter of a million packages were placed in the hands of the A.E.F. last week. Almost a half million will be in use by the first week in December, the Chief Paymaster estimates. Officers' identity cards, issued to them in the United States and bearing their photographs and signatures, will be collected on board transports and turned over to the landing officers of the base ports in France. The base adjutant at the port will register, countersign and renumber the cards and hand them back to their owners. Thus approved, they will serve as the identity cards needed in France. G.O. 187 provides.

French and British newspapers are now almost universally using the word "Yank." The French, in conversation, have recently begun to abbreviate American to "Hiccia." Tin cans with covers, such as candy, tobacco or baking powder containers, are now being turned in by S.O.S. outfits and used for issuing dabbins in squad lots, a can to a squad. Tin foil wrapped around cigarettes and the empty tins left over when the tooth paste or shaving cream is all squeezed out are also being collected at commissaries, canteens, recreation huts and similar places, and later turned over to the Salvage Service.

Officers returning permanently or indefinitely to the United States will take with them their qualification cards and personnel records, and an enlisted man returning will take his qualification card, service record, pay book, pay card, individual equipment record and other individual records. This is directed in G.O. 188.

To save themselves from being infested with vermin carrying the germs of trench fever, officers at a hospital will be handling clothing of men just out of the trenches wear special suits made of two pairs of flannel pajamas sewn together and sprayed with crescent oil. Before these suits were worn, 33 of 190 men in eight months contracted various forms of trench fever. Since the suits were adopted there have been no new infections.

Several small contingents of Australians, men who enlisted in 1914 and have been fighting ever since, have left for three months' home leave. Among their well wishers on the eve of departure were many American soldiers with whom they had fought on the British front.

The Christmas package restrictions to soldiers of the A.E.F. are also applied to members of the auxiliary services. They will each be entitled to one package, nine by four by three inches in size. Needless opening of barrels and kegs is forbidden in S.O.S. bulletin 31, in order that the receptacles may be used again. Empty oil and lard barrels and pickle kegs are to be used for shipping rendered drippings, rough fats and by-products to the Kitchen Economics Branch, Salvage Service.

Two francs is the market price for apples at Dijon, where the A.E.F. Central Medical Laboratories are operating in the university. Grapes are also bought. Sausages and antioxins are made at Dijon, and research workers also use the laboratories. The French fishing village of Antibes is called the windiest place in the A.E.F. Terrible winds and storms sweep in from the Atlantic on this town, where an American hospital now rivals one of the other big attractions, the sardine cannery.

WATERWAYS UNDER FEDERAL CONTROL

Delaware - Raritan Canal
Completes Chain Reach-
ing to Buffalo

RAILROADS RUNNING WELL

Transportation Problem Sure to
Be Great Battleground in
America at War's End

[BY CABLE TO THE STARS AND STRIPES.]

AMERICA, Nov. 7.—The Government this week took over the Delaware-Raritan canal, and now has under its management a system of waterways from Buffalo to Delaware. There is little doubt now that, no matter how quickly the war emergency may end, we shall have a clear-cut understanding on the whole national transportation situation and will be able to attack the hugely important problem of its future conduct with something like exact knowledge to guide us.

Of course, the big experiment in Government railroad and transportation management would have paid for war purposes, even if it had otherwise been such a failure that, with peace, there would have been nothing to do but gradually return to the original control and wash our hands of it.

But the great experiment has not been a failure. Without going into any financial aspect of it, the big fact is before even the end of the country that it has been absolutely successful from the operating point of view.

Never before has the American transportation system had such colossal work to do as in this war, and never has that work been better done. Never before have conditions worse than when the railroads were taken over. Wicked weather conditions choked the terminals, and rolling stock was worn out and diminished by the inordinate work of the three preceding years of huge shipments to sea-board.

The nation not only succeeded in solving this problem, but simultaneously has succeeded in vastly increasing shipments and moving huge bodies of men besides. It is certain that in 1914 nine men out of ten would have prophesied disaster for such an experiment, and we may well be happy and proud that we have proved what a democracy can do under efficient government.

There will unquestionably be a big and presumably protracted struggle over the future management of the railroads. Apart from those interested merely from selfish interests, there is a sharp division between two very large and intelligent bodies of public opinion, the one believing earnestly in private initiative and control, the other in Government control, if not outright Government ownership.

It is altogether likely that a great start as soon as the war is definitely out of the way, and nobody has yet ventured even to guess how it will end. One thing certain, however, is that, even if the railroads return to private control, it will not be the autocratic or slipshod private control of the past. Our great experiment has settled that much.

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Sentry: Sh-h-h-h! There's a German out there!
(Colonel retreats through communicating trench.)
Sentry: I never could remember them general orders, anyway.

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FIREWOOD FOR MEN IN LINE THIS WINTER

Every Soldier to Have Half
Cubic Meter for Cook-
ing and Warmth

The A.E.F. is going to be kept warm this winter. The Forestry section has undertaken the task of cutting enough wood between now and the first of the year to provide every man at the front with half a cubic meter of wood to cook his food and keep him warm and in fighting trim during the cold weather. In cold figures, the Foresters have promised the Q.M.C. to deliver 1,100,000 steres—that is, cubic meters—of fuel wood on the road ready for distribution before the first of the new year. Put in another way, it means a stack of wood one meter high and one meter broad which, if it was extended along the road, would reach from Paris to Berlin.

A small army of woodsmen is at work in the French forests in the advance section of the S.O.S., getting out the timber, cutting it into shape for use and stacking it up on the roadside where the truck trains can get at it and carry it off to the front.

As the officer in charge of the project of getting the doughboys' fuel out of the woods says, "Wood with the war, but the war cannot be won without wood. If George Washington had had forestry troops to draw upon, his men would not have suffered as they did at Valley Forge. The men of the Forestry section will see that history does not repeat itself in this respect."

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